THE CHURCH

AWAKENED TO

HER DUTY AND HER DANGER:

A SERMON PREACHED FOR THE

Board of Foreign Missions,

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 1, 1853, IN THE CHURCH ON FIFTH AVENUE AND NINETEENTH STREET, NEW YORK; AND ALSO IN THE CENTRAL CHURCH, PHILADELPHIA, ON SABBATH EVENING, MAY 22, 1853.

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SERMON.

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," &c.—Rom. x.13–15.

On the subject of Foreign Missions—that is, the sending and supporting preachers of the Gospel in all the world, according to the command of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ—it is impossible to say anything new. Novelty can no longer attract the eager attention of an awakened curiosity. The *terra incognita* of heathendom has been explored. The era of peril and adventure has, to a great extent, passed away. The teeming multitudes of pagans, once so partially known to us, have now swelled into six hundred and fifty millions, rushing, like the foaming waters of Niagara, over the precipice of death, into the fearful gulf of a dark and dreadful eternity. By the vivid light thrown upon them we have been enabled as it were to look out from our calm and quiet home upon each particular man and woman in that vast torrent—to see them, in their various forms of misery, rolling on from crag to crag in those fearful rapids—and to hear them, amid their diversities of vernacular tongues, all sinking with one and the same articulate language of despair. Nay, so full and accurate have been the observations made, that we can tell the number who every day and hour, and even moment, are thus passing beyond the reach of human help or hope.

Now, it is a principle of our nature that thoughts and impressions lose their power to influence and control us the more frequently they pass through our minds. Thus, constant exposure to danger lessens fear, and the frequent observation of misery and death deadens our sense of pity and alarm. And thus, also, it is that the spectacle of millions of human beings sitting "in the

region and shadow of death," "without God and without hope in the world," having lost its novelty, ceases to attract attention or to enkindle sympathy.

Our nature, however, cannot be totally destroyed. Even when "seared as with a hot iron," the essential principles of our moral constitution cannot be altogether paralyzed. Truth, which is in its own nature solemn and convincing, cannot but lead to an appreciation correspondent to its magnitude and importance. Let that truth—as, for instance, the certainty of death—be one in which our own interests are vitally at stake—one which brings with it a conviction of duty, a sense of accountability to God, and which thus involves our everlasting destiny, and let it be brought home by some present and affecting demonstration of its approach to ourselves or to those dear to us, and in spite of all our general indifference and unconcern, we are overwhelmed with absorbing emotions of sorrow and distress, hope and fear. And when any man, however impenitent and hardened, allows himself, or is, by the preaching of the Gospel, *made* to look forward to that judgment which is after death, and to realize that every man must "render an account of himself unto God," he cannot but be filled with a "certain fearful looking for of judgment and of fiery indignation."

From such truths the mind may be averted through unbelief; but, come when they will, and by what means they may, before the contemplation of the mind, they must arouse its deepest consideration and its most anxious concern. The appeal is made not only to our understanding, but also to our conscience. By the former we are convinced and convicted; by the latter we are condemned, sentenced, and held amenable to a righteous retribution. Oh, yes, conscience is the mightiest principle in our nature! There is no other such terrible word as remorse, and no other such miserable object in the universe as a self-tormented soul, lashed by the furies of its own inexorable self-condemnings.

Now, conscience is immortal and indestructible. It never dies. It sleeps, indeed, in fitful slumbers; but it is only that, when aroused by the midnight cry of danger, it may awake as a strong man armed and made fierce with impetuous passion. The power of truth, involving duty, to affect the mind at every believing contemplation of it, is still greater when the authority

which enforces it is indubitable—when the rule which prescribes it is plain—and when the eye of the lawgiver is witness to our conduct. And when to this necessity for obedience there is added the evidence of success consequent upon our efforts, the assurance of giving satisfaction, and of obtaining the recompense of reward, then, as in the case of the diligent scholar, the industrious husbandman, and of man in every other calling of life, truth becomes mighty, and prevails over all the natural tendency of our hearts to lose the impression of familiar and well-known truth.

And here, as everywhere, we see the goodness of our all-wise Creator, in that those active habits which mould the character, give principle to duty, power to effort, and perseverance and success to enterprise, may be gradually formed and strengthened, even while the thoughts and feelings first inducing us to act become weak and powerless. By acting in conformity with such motives, when awakened within us by some stirring appeal, our habits of active and willing discharge of duty will strengthen even while the incitements to it are less and less sensibly felt. The mere temporary pity for others, or alarm for our own neglect, will thus become a principle, "wrought somehow into the temper and character," and made constantly effective in influencing our nature.

In this way the noblest traits of humanity are developed and made characteristic. The child of fear becomes bold and intrepid. The indolent becomes industrious, the selfish disinterested, the churl liberal, while the man who can meet death without fear in the discharge of duty, lives in the most watchful preparation for his latter end. And thus also is it that the man who under the excitement of compassion for the perishing, whether at home or abroad, is led habitually to do what in him lies for their relief, while his heart is less and less sensibly affected by the contemplation of their misery; nevertheless, "benevolence, considered not as a *passion* but as a *principle*," will strengthen, so that whilst he feels and pities less, he prays and gives and does good all the more.* God has thus secured for duty the power, protection, and ever sustaining life of principle. He has not left it to the mere fitful and evanescent excitement of sympathy and compassion—a feeling which requires

* See Butler's Analogy, Part I., Chap. V.

direction and control—which is fluctuating and uncertain—which is misled by fancy—disgusted by sober realities—wearied by disappointment—extinguished by ingratitude—and which by its own temporary impulse soon dies away. Principle, however, is based on consideration, truth and duty, and is therefore as constant and potent as the truth on which it is founded, the authority to which it defers, and the obligation by which it is impelled.

We are thus led to perceive also the wisdom and goodness of God, in so constituting our nature, that while easily aroused to duty by the impulse of natural affection, that duty may become delight by the very habit of discharging it; and, still further, in that, in order to keep our minds and hearts continually alive to a sense of our obligations, He has instituted the ministry of the Gospel. It is in God's stead we preach, beseech and persuade men. It is in His name and by His authority we commend truth and duty to every man's conscience in the sight of God. It is God's word which is put into our hands as a *hammer* to break into pieces every flinty rock,—as a *fire* to melt the most hard and obdurate,—as the *rain* that cometh down on the mown grass to refresh and fertilize the thirsty soul—and as the still small voice to the ear of anxious love solicitous to hear, or to him that goeth softly because of his inward sorrow.

Thus it is that God giveth us line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little—holding forth to us the glass of duty—writing conviction upon our hearts,—deepening impressions when they have become faint or obliterated,—alarming the careless—arousing the slumbering—and stimulating to continued and unceasing efforts the diligent and devoted. By precept; by promises; by encouragement; by warning; by hope and fear; by the assurance of success and deliverance from all difficulties; by the wisdom drawn from past failures; and boldness derived from past victories; we are kept steadfast, immovable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord.

It is on these grounds, my brethren, we base the importance of such discourses as the present, and on which we have hope in addressing you on this occasion.

The truth about which we now preach is the glorious Gospel of the blessed God; that truth which makes known the only way

in which guilty man can be recovered from his apostasy, replaced in the favor of God, and secured in what is most precious to immortal creatures,—a complete and never-ending felicity.

This Gospel is a talent with which we are put in trust. "Unto us is committed the oracles of God;" the promises and provisions of salvation; the balm of souls all o'er diseased; the only antidote to the sting of death; and the only source of everlasting life.

As such, the Gospel is the gift of God and the manifestation of the inconceivable love of God to all mankind. By the everlasting purpose and decree of God, the heathen are given to Christ and the uttermost parts of the earth for His possession. The provisions of the covenant of grace are for all the apostate race of Adam. The propitiation made by Christ is "for the sins of the whole world." The promises of God, from the beginning, have included the whole family of man. Prophecy foretells the universal offer and triumph of the Gospel. Christ is "the Saviour of all men." The Holy Spirit is given to "convince the world." God now commandeth ALL MEN EVERY WHERE to believe the Gospel. This Gospel is to be preached to every creature in all the world. And it is the power of God to the salvation of every one that believeth, whether Jew or Gentile.

The universal diffusion and triumph of the Gospel is therefore a fixed fact. Heaven and earth may pass away, but one jot or tittle of all that God has said concerning it shall not pass away until all be fulfilled. Prayer to God that "his way may be known upon earth and his saving health among all nations" was a part of the constant prayers of God's Church under the former economy, and is made equally necessary now, both by the petitions embodied in the Lord's Prayer, and by the injunction given by Christ to "pray the Lord of the harvest that He would send forth more laborers into the harvest."

The Church, composed of every believing soul, is constituted the pillar and ground of the truth, to preserve, perpetuate and propagate it. She is the "Angel" or messenger of Christ, "having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people."

The promise given by Christ to the Church of his abiding pre-

sence and blessing, is made to depend upon her obedience to this divine commission. "Behold," therefore, says our Saviour on another occasion, "I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem until ye be endued with power from on high." "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

The Church is therefore the trustee of the Gospel. To her as a Steward are committed the oracles and the ordinances of God, for the benefit of the world. No angel appears, as once to the Virgin Mary, to make known the Savior. No star is seen to guide the wise men of the East to the manger of Bethlehem. All is concentrated in the Church. To her alone the privilege is granted. On her alone the responsibility rests to preach among the Gentiles, as well as Jews, "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

We are therefore "debtors." "We are debtors both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise." We owe to every unevangelized human being that Gospel, which is "the true riches, the pearl of great price." It is only given to us in trust. Neither we, nor it, are our own.

Woe therefore is unto that Church and unto that member of the Church, who does not, directly or indirectly, by prayer, by influence, by liberal help, by co-operation, by advice, by consecrating his children, and bringing them up for God,—woe unto him who does not, as he has opportunity and ability, "preach the Gospel to every creature." Yes, Christian, you are a light, but if that light is hid under a bushel and not set on high, so as to give light to all, what is it good for? Yes, Christian, you are as leaven, but if that leaven is confined to your own heart, to your own family, to your own church, to your own country, instead of leavening the whole mass of humanity, what is it good for? Yes, Christian, you are salt, but if the salt has lost the power to savor, purify and preserve, what is it good for? Ah! says Christ, that professing Christian who liveth unto himself—who seeks his own things and not the things that are Christ's, is none of His.

The command of Christ is the command of a living, loving, divine, and all-powerful Redeemer. It is as extensive as the earth, as enduring as time, and as comprehensive as the pro-

mise of the love and presence of Christ, and of his Spirit, with which it is accompanied. It is as much in force at this moment, as when it was first delivered; and it will come home to every believing heart as fresh and powerful as when it first proceeded from the Saviour's lips.

But to this commission the divine head of the Church added another most solemn and authoritative command. For when after his resurrection he appeared personally to the Apostle Paul, his words to him, and through him to the Church, were these: "I send thee" unto the Gentiles, "to open their eyes and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

Acting upon the divine commission thus emphatically renewed, the triumphs of the Gospel were soon extended to the utmost limits of the Roman empire, and even into countries which Rome's victorious legions had never seen. So long as the Church remained evangelical in doctrine, she continued evangelistic in effort. The simplicity of Gospel truth secured a missionary spirit, and this the missionary benediction, so that even the persecutions raised by the enemies of the truth were made to work together for the propagation of the truth.

But after a time the elements of Gentile philosophy, and the idolatrous customs of the heathen nations who partially embraced Christianity, were combined with the Gospel, and thus a spurious system of doctrine and practice was soon produced: so that, instead of subduing heathenism, the Church to a large extent was subdued by it. The true simplicity of the Gospel was forsaken. The ark of God was therefore no longer with the armies of Israel. Paganized Christianity in the West and East led to the abandonment of Gospel truth—this, to the loss of the missionary spirit—and this, to the forfeiture of the missionary promise and blessing. The purity and strength of the Church were lost together. Subverting the Gospel by human corruptions, Popery destroyed the vitality of the Church, and made it an easy prey to the arms of the Moslem.

It is not unusual to hear the progress of the Gospel spoken of, as a process that has been steadily, though slowly, advancing from the apostolic age to the present time. This, however, is a

great mistake. The Church has sometimes fallen so far back in one age, that ages have been required to enable her to regain her former position. It would be most painfully interesting to recall the thousands of Churches that once flourished in Northern Africa, along the southern shores of the Mediterranean, in Egypt, and the countries round it; in Asia Minor, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Persia, to the very banks of the Indus—in Central Asia, from the shores of the Caspian to the borders of China; yea, and within it—in India, in Bactria, in Armenia, and in Arabia—so that there can be little doubt that about the time when Mohammedanism first appeared in the East, the number of nominal Christians was greater in proportion to the whole population of the then known world than it was at the commencement of the nineteenth century.

The Reformation was scarcely sufficient to arrest the retrograde movement that had been commenced centuries before, nor have all the efforts of modern missions, and the colonization of this new world, fully compensated for the ground previously lost.

By her original constitution the Church was formed for conquest, and, like every other army when she becomes inactive, she must become demoralized. Active operations for extending her dominion, instead of impairing her internal energies, are the only means of increasing her efficiency. A pure church, properly accomplishing all local objects, and yet destitute of a missionary spirit that is of an active, zealous and diffusive character, is a contradiction. No such church ever long existed, and from the very nature of things, cannot possibly exist. Internal spirituality, living piety, and sound doctrine, cannot coexist in churches, or individuals, with the absence of a missionary spirit. The form of godliness may be manifested, but the power is wanting. The external lineaments of faith may be assumed, but withdraw the mask and you behold only a dead corpse.

You see your calling, therefore, brethren. Every Christian is a soldier enlisted by his own voluntary consecration, with a solemn oath, under the banners of the great Captain of salvation,—the leader and commander of his people,—to fight manfully and valiantly for the cause of truth and righteousness.

The hosts of the mighty are still encamped against the Lord,

and His anointed. Popery still numbers her millions. Mohammedanism counts her millions, and Paganism her six hundred and fifty millions. Infidelity also, and a "world lying in wickedness" in the very midst of Christendom, number their millions. The world is not yet converted. It is far, very far from being converted.

Why, then, is this the case? Who is to blame? This melancholy state of things does not, we have seen, arise from any limitation of the Gospel in the love or purposes of God—in the provision of his covenant—in the gift or propitiation of his Son—in the office and agency of the Holy Ghost—or in the commission of his Church. These all conspire to impress upon every member of the Church the certainty of the ultimate and universal triumph of the Gospel through the agency of man, accompanied by the omnipotent power of the Holy Ghost. That there is great and inexcusable guilt resting upon the Church, and proportionably upon every individual member of the Church, cannot therefore be denied. The obligation and the disobedience are both equally plain and indisputable.

Has man, then, in his weakness, defeated the purposes of God, who is able to do "whatsoever it pleaseth him among the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth?" "God forbid."

Take an illustration from a kindred subject. All power in heaven and on earth was at the disposal of Christ, when, as man, he was "by wicked hands crucified and slain." For the glory of God's grace that Redeemer's advent, promised from the beginning of the world, was withheld until "the fulness of time came." And when Christ had come, and "his own," to whom he came, in inexcusable guilt nailed him to the accursed tree, they at one and the same time filled up the measure of their own iniquity, and fulfilled the predestined, though to them unknown, purpose of God. Here, then, we find the promised coming of the Saviour, though made immutably certain, long hindered and delayed by man's wilful depravity, and the Saviour himself, by the wickedness of an unbelieving Church, actually put to death in the flesh. And here we see also how God made even the perversity and wicked-

ness of man to work together for the ultimate accomplishment of His gracious promise.

In like manner, the universal triumph of the Gospel has been foretold in prophecy, and made certain by promise, provision and command, from the very beginning. But the Devil, who is called the god of this world, in alliance with the evil heart of unbelieving and unholy men, has, by every possible device and cunning craftiness, withstood the progress of the Gospel.

In unison with him, and under his direction, all the power of worldly influence, political ambition, selfish patriotism, covetousness, penurious bigotry, and open skepticism and infidelity, have leagued their powers, by argument, by wit, by raillery, and by public opinion, to accomplish the same end.

Even a more formidable obstacle to the *inward* power and external progress of the Gospel has been found in that amalgamation of heathen philosophy and superstition with some portions of Gospel truth, which constitutes the system of Popery. We are informed, on divine authority, that as early as the days of the Apostles, "the mystery of iniquity" had begun to work—that, ere very long, "that wicked should be fully revealed," and that from the time of his full development "the man of sin and son of perdition" would, with the co-operation of civil powers, "exalt himself above all that is called God," during the space of twelve hundred years. During all this time, whenever and wherever the Romish Church has had power, the pure Gospel and the missionary spirit have been the objects of exterminating persecution.

Even within the bosom of those Churches of Christ which substantially hold the pure Gospel, there has been much indifference and neglect of the missionary spirit, and, consequently, but a partial bestowment of the missionary benediction upon them and their labors. Rivalries, contentions for denominational preeminence, sectarian jealousy, partial views of the truth, unbelief and want of confidence in the divine authority, commission, and promise of the Church, and, therefore, in the order of the divine blessing, a greater reliance upon human wisdom and human systems than upon the simplicity of Bible truth and Scriptural policy, together with a misapprehension of the true nature of the Chris-

tian character and of the real obligations under which the disciple of Jesus is brought—these causes, terminating as they do in that supreme love of the world which gives to it and not to Christ the mastery over the time, talents, property, purposes, and habits, even of professing Christians—these are the sources of that lukewarmness and positive opposition which have been, and still are, manifested within the Church itself, to the dissemination of the Gospel.

A sound and orthodox creed, a blameless conduct, membership in some Church, and a measure of support to its institutions and charities, have come to be regarded as the elements of a perfect Christian character. It seems to be almost forgotten, or at least not practically remembered, that the greater number of sins are sins of omission—that these may prove a want of true piety just as certainly as sins of commission—that they are just as much the subject of penitential confession and prayer—that the negligent, though professedly obedient son, the unprofitable servant, the lazy, selfish holder of his Lord's talent, the unfruitful, though leaf-bearing tree—they that take their ease in Zion—they who mind their own things and live unto themselves—it is forgotten, we say, that they, in short, who have omitted to do what they should have done for Christ and His cause, are the very persons against whom even now the curse is uttered; "because they come not up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty," and against whom, at the day of judgment, the awful sentence will be pronounced, "Inasmuch as ye did it not unto one of the least of these, ye did it not unto me."

Christian faith rests on Christ. Christian life is derived from union to Christ. This union to Christ is the ground of the believer's justification, sanctification, and redemption. Christ and his people are one. His sufferings and theirs, His cause and theirs, His glory and theirs, are one. And as Christ became united to the whole human race, as the head and representative of his people in the covenant of grace, it follows that every believer is not only under obligation to consider the glory, the honor, the cause of Christ as his, but, from the very nature of Christian life, love, and experience, he cannot but judge that if Christ died for all, then all died in him; and that they who live by his life should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died

for them and rose again. And as all that is precious in the Gospel, in the writings of the Apostles, in the promises, in the means of grace, and in the hopes of glory, are among the gifts bestowed by Christ in the fulfilment of his ascending promise, it is still more clearly evident that no man has any warrant to hope in Christ, or any evidence of his life being hid with Christ in God, except as he is found obedient to the great end and purpose for which Christ has instituted the Church, and calls out of the world every believing member of the Church.

No refuge of lies, therefore, can be more certain to betray the hopes of its vain, deluded victims than the too prevalent idea that Christian character and duty are confined to those things which concern our own immediate interests as Christians, churches, or denominations. This would at once transform the Christian spirit, which is love, charity, and devotion to God, in gratitude for a soul redeemed, regenerated, and united to Christ, into spiritual selfishness. "But he that keepeth my commandments he it is that loveth me," and "faith without works is dead."

These, then, are the causes which have led to the *partial* progress and power of the Gospel, both at home and abroad. For it was just as much a part of the divine purpose and promise that the triumphs of the Gospel should be achieved, through causes purely moral, and for the operation of which human beings are accountable, as that it should finally and assuredly take place.

These causes of the partial progress of the Gospel, it is also plain, arise from the guilt of God's creatures, voluntarily incurred, in opposition to his plain commands, to the original design of the Gospel and to the purposes of divine mercy. They are, in every case, the native activity of human corruption—the effects of the free agency of *wicked* men, or of the remaining wickedness of *good* men, stimulated by their depraved passions, and deceived by the blinding influence of the god of this world.

All this evil God has permitted to exist and to continue, just as he permitted the "filling up the measure of their iniquity" by the ancient nations, and the crucifixion of our Lord. He even foretold the existence and continuance of these causes of the slow progress in the Gospel—the consequent waxing cold of the love of his true disciples—the prevalence of error—and the partial triumph and overthrow of the Gospel, "until the time appointed

by the Father should come." God's promise has not therefore failed, nor is the Lord "slack concerning his promise." The same sovereign wisdom has been at work on God's part during all this time, in which scoffers ask with unbelieving profanity "where is the promise of his coming," as during the period before the coming of the Saviour. GOD HAS NOT FORGOTTEN EITHER HIS PROMISE OR HIS PURPOSE. They are as infallible as His own nature, as immutable as His own throne, and as certain as His own omnipotence.

The guilt of the heathen—of the world—of Satan—of the man of sin—and of an unfaithful and unbelieving Church, God has permitted, and will surely punish, as he has in part done. And all these hindrances to the progress of the Gospel, as in the preparation for the introduction of the Gospel, God will make to work together for the greater glory of His own great name, when the fulness of time has come, and the Church shall "arise and shine, the glory of the Lord being arisen upon her." God's purposes can only be a rule for our conduct so far as He has been pleased to reveal them as directions for our conduct. In this case, they constitute a warrant and an encouragement. But where God's purpose is only revealed prophetically, so as to exhibit a fixed and certain result, without disclosing to us the definite period when it shall be realized, and the special means by which it shall be brought about, then, the *command* of God, and not His *ultimate purpose*, is the rule of our present duty. God may have many purposes to accomplish before fulfilling that to which these all conspire, as in the case before us. The rule of our conduct and that of the divine procedure, are essentially different.

The Gospel is, therefore, universally to triumph, and that through the instrumentality of the Church. In this faith and hope, the Church is to labor and pray—to spend and be spent. In so doing, and only in so doing, she preserves, perpetuates, and enlarges herself—secures her purity and power, and the promised blessing—and escapes the righteous judgment of God. Such obedience will be always acceptable, and always effectual to great and glorious results. But how far they will advance the ultimate triumph of Christ's kingdom, and the final overthrow of Satan's power, must be left to God's infinite wisdom in consummating His own divine plan. The nature of our duty is plain

and positive. The time of our duty is always present. The measure of our obedience is the utmost that our ability and opportunity will allow. The success and the recompense of our self-sacrifice will always be proportionate; and when God withholds the former, He will multiply the latter. Everything, however, seems to show that the night of toilsome expectation is drawing to a close, and that the dawn of the promised day is breaking upon the marshalled forces of Satan and of Christ. Did time permit, it were easy to show that many things in the condition of heathen and of anti-Christian lands, betoken the working of superhuman agency in preparing the way, and overruling every event for the subjugation of all Christ's enemies—the display of His power in consuming them by the spirit of His mouth, and the brightness of His coming—and in communicating the blessing of salvation to the whole race of Adam.

Let us then again fix your attention upon the object of the Foreign Missionary work. As it regards God in Christ, the object of Foreign Missions is the discharge of our duty by preaching the Gospel to every creature in all the world—by discipling them and instructing them in all things whatsoever Christ has commanded—by the manifestation of an implicit and filial obedience to His commands—by our prayerful zeal and devotion to His cause and glory as our own—and by contributing, as far as it may please Him to make use of our services and sacrifices, to the consummation of the promised glory of the Church, and the universal establishment of the kingdom of Christ.

As it regards mankind, the object of Foreign Missions is to proclaim to them the knowledge of the only true God—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—and of Jesus Christ, the only name under heaven by which they can be saved.

There are, we have said, about 756,000,000 of human beings beyond the Christian pale, and to a great extent, beyond the possible knowledge of salvation.

These are every one of them our fellow-beings, our neighbors, whom we are bound to love even as ourselves; our brethren, of whose spiritual interest we are keepers; our creditors, to whom we are debtors, having been put in trust with the Gospel for them.

They are our fellow-sufferers. Besides all the sorrows and afflictions common to our apostate and accursed humanity, they are subjected to sufferings peculiar to themselves. They are sunk in temporal wretchedness—the victims of rapine, violence, and murder, afflicted, afflicting, and destroying one another. Their spirit is that of fear. Their anticipations are those of terror, and they live in habitations of horrid cruelty. All this, and more than this, they live to endure, without anything to alleviate their distresses, sweeten the bitter draught, soften their hard and thorny couch, calm their fears, or draw out the sting of death.

These millions are our fellow-sinners. With us they sinned. With us they are condemned. So that God hath concluded all under sin, and the whole world is guilty before Him. Of this sin they are conscious. The writings of the heathen are full of the confessions of sin, and the conscience of every pagan both accuses and condemns him as guilty of sin, and deserving of, and exposed to, punishment. Hence the secret dread of divine vengeance. Hence the various methods by which they attempt to propitiate the Deity.

The language of the heathen poet, Anacreon, in bemoaning his own approaching death, is not too strong as a general expression of heathen gloom :—

> "Henceforth unhappy! doomed to know
> Tormenting fears of future woe!
> Oh, how my soul with horror shrinks
> Whene'er my startled fancy thinks
> Of Pluto's dark and dreary cave,
> The chill, the cheerless, gaping grave!"

The heathen, however, are not merely sinners. Their sins are of the deepest dye. The Word of God everywhere reprobates idolatry as "the abominable thing which God hates." It is apostasy from God. It is rebellion against God. It is the abjuration of allegiance to God. It is the dethronement of the only living and true God, and the setting up of an impious rival. It destroys the soul of all duty, which is obedience to the divine command. It is based upon aversion to God, and dislike to the purity and spirituality of his character. It dishonors God by all its foul representations, its silly images, its contemptible ceremonies, and

its impious claims. Idolatry also ruins man as a rational and moral agent—the accountable subject of God. It prohibits reason, entangles intellect, pollutes the heart, silences or perverts conscience, taints every apparent virtue, stimulates the passions, deadens sensibility, excludes light, consecrates vice, deifies sin, exalts some fellow-men into the tyranny of fictitious godhead, and tramples upon others as the dust and filth of the earth. Idolatry, therefore, is condemned, both in the first and second commandments—in the Old and New Testament—and it has been followed by the most signal and fearful inflictions of divine wrath.*

Nor does this criminality attach to idolatry merely in its original form. The present generation of the heathen are without excuse. They voluntarily approve and adopt the iniquity of their fathers. They are willingly ignorant. Their own sacred books—their knowledge of right and wrong—their laws and penalties—their mutual judgments of each other's character and conduct—their self-accusings for wrong done and for good undone—their sense of sin—their voluntary sacrifices, fasts and penances—their dread of God, of death, and of future misery—these are awful proofs that the heathen are wilfully sinners, without excuse, and self-condemned.

God, then, is not unrighteous in having left them to their self-chosen iniquities, in denouncing wrath against them, and in taking vengeance upon them. They are sinners judged by their own knowledge of duty, and their own voluntary admission of evil. They are guilty before God. They have "no hope, and are without God in the world." They are lost. They are "condemned already," and the angel of destruction stands ready to "pour out the fury of God upon the heathen."

Now the Gospel, as we have seen, is the proclamation of a deliverance from nothing less than an eternity of misery; the possession of nothing less than an eternity of bliss; and of this salvation the Apostle in our text teaches that all men, Jew and Gentile, have equal need, and that of it all should have an equal offer.

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* Judg. ii. 11, 12, 13, 14. Judg. iii. 7, 8; x. 6, 7, 13, 14. II. Kings xvii. 7, 8–18. Ps. cvi. 28–29. Ex. xxxii. 26, 27, 28. The fate of Solomon, I. Kings xxi. 1, 9, 11, 33—of Jeroboam, I. Kings xxii. 28 and 14: 2–17—of Baasha, I. Kings xxvi. 3–12—of Ahab. I. Kings xxvi. 30 and 21: 21 and 22: 34, 38—and II. Kings xx. 11—of Ahaziah. II. Kings i. 1, 2, 3, 4, 17—of Jehoram, II. Chron. xxi. 11, 14, 19—of Manasseh, II. Kings xxi. 3, 4, 5, 6; II. Chron. xxxiii. 2-15—of Amaziah, II. Chron. xxv. 14–20, 23, &c.

For when this salvation is not presented, no salvation can be had, since, as the Apostle argues, faith is the condition of acceptance, and "faith cometh by hearing." It may be said that God *can* and *may* save the heathen without the Gospel. This, however, is an assertion which only bold impiety can make, and which only God himself could answer. Our business, most assuredly, is not with what God *can* do, but, with what he *has* done, with what he has said he *will* do, and with what God *requires us* to do.

This much we do know. The heathen in the Apostles' days stood in no greater need of the Gospel than they do in our own day. If, then, *they* were declared to be perishing without the Gospel, and if, by positive divine command, that Gospel was sent to them, then, in God's judgment, they could not be saved without it. The permanency of God's command proves also, that according to God's plan of administration, the heathen can at no time be saved without the Gospel; and so it was understood by the Apostles, by the apostolic and primitive churches, by every pure body of Christ's people from that period until the Reformation, and by every one of the reformed churches, Anglican, Lutheran, and Evangelical, who have embodied this truth as a fundamental doctrine in their confessions.*

That the heathen may be saved without the Gospel is, therefore, a deistical, infidel tenet. For, if the heathen in America or in Africa do not need the Gospel in order to salvation, neither do any heathen need it. But, if the heathen do not need the Gospel in order to salvation *now*, they did not need it at any other period of the world, and the Gospel is not necessary to the salvation of any man. It is a lie.

But supposing God could save the heathen without the Gospel —the sending of the Gospel to the heathen is made the test of our obedience, and the ground either of our approval and blessing, or of our condemnation and guilt. Even, therefore, on this supposition, prudence and a regard to our own present and everlasting good, should actuate every man, whether believer or unbeliever, to avoid the awful responsibility of seeming to be wiser than God, and of actually being disobedient to the requirements of God. And especially inexcusable will the unbeliever be found, when the sympathies of our common nature impel us

* See Note at the end.

to feel for the temporal condition and misery of the heathen; and reason must redden at the sight of a human being, dead to all the interests of the great family of immortals, to which he belongs. Even a heathen poet could call forth rapturous applause from a heathen audience by the declaration in words,

"Homo sum et nil humani a me alienum puto."

"I am a man, and I regard nothing pertaining to the happiness of man as foreign to me."

This condition of the heathen, however, as lost, guilty and condemned, is not, let it be remembered, the consequence of the Gospel, nor of their want of the Gospel. To be in this condition is not peculiar to the heathen. The Scriptures teach us that since the fall of Adam, all human beings, whether born in a heathen or a Christian country, are sinners, and equally in a perishing state. The only natural difference between man born in a Christian and man born in a heathen country is, that the one class having the Gospel, are in possession of the means which God has graciously provided for the salvation of lost and guilty men; while the heathen, being without the Gospel, have not the means of salvation, and are therefore "perishing for lack of knowledge."

But for this condition of the heathen, who is to blame? Most assuredly, as we have seen, it is not God, who "so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him, should be saved." Most assuredly not God, who has commanded His Church and people to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, promising to be with them always even unto the end of the world. And this promise God has always and in every case fulfilled, so that had the Church continued until now to obey this command, as actively and as firmly as she did in the two first centuries, there would not at this time have been a single nation sitting in the region and shadow of death. As well, therefore, might God be charged with the destruction of His creatures, and with unmerciful austerity, because he does not depart from the economy of nature, in order to preserve men from dying when the remedy appointed by Him has been criminally neglected or withheld, as when he does not depart from the order established by Him, as the God of

grace, in order to save the heathen without the Gospel, when that Gospel has been sinfully neglected and withheld by those who were put in trust with it, and by many of the heathen themselves.

On the Church of Christ,—on the ministers,—on the elders, deacons, and members of our churches,—on every Christian individually,—lies the dishonor, the disgrace, and the guilt of abandoning the heathen to their fate. What more could God have done than he has done? To us—to us—and not to God, is imputable that compromise of human safety, that dereliction of the duty which we owe to ourselves, to the heathen, and to God, whose culpability no language is too strong to express and to condemn.

God by His Word depicts the heathen as perishing in their sins. God calls with authoritative, beseeching, earnestness—hasten—go—send the Gospel to these heathen nations—to all of them, overlooking none—seeing that they are dying, "and he alone that believeth shall be saved, while he that believeth not shall be damned."

The Gospel is the only cure for moral maladies, the only specific against eternal death. Enjoying, then, as we do, this spiritual panacea—participating, as we are permitted to do, in its life-giving power—and impressively charged, as we are, to convey it to dying millions—how great is our inhumanity and cruelty to them, and how gross our ingratitude, dishonesty and disobedience towards God, in withholding this "unspeakable gift!"

To the ear of Christian humanity, the cry for help comes to us on the wings of every wind. It may be heard in the sighing of the solitary forest—in the night-wind's melancholy moan—in the murmuring of delirious grief, carried by every sea to every shore. It is the cry of our fellow-mortals, sinking under the weight of human sorrows, tormented by inward pain, distracted by fear, without hope in this world, and who have nothing for the world to come but "a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation."

There is, blessed be God, both help and hope; "for," says God in our text, "WHOSOEVER shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." But how shall THEY call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall THEY believe in him of whom

they have not heard? and how shall THEY hear without a preacher? and how shall THEY preach except they be sent?

The effect, it will be observed, is here attributed by the apostle altogether to the instrumentality of man, and that, too, in an age of miracles. How plain, then, is it, that while all the power comes from God alone, that, nevertheless, he imparts that power only in and through the appointed means. And how true, therefore, is it that the piety which would excuse itself from a diligent, self-denying and liberal employment of those means, under the pretext that God alone can convert the heathen, is a piety "of our own forging," and in utter contrariety to the piety of God, of the Bible, and of Paul.

My brethren, my brethren, oh! let us remember that the knowledge of our duty, and the excitement of our affections to discharge that duty more perseveringly and perfectly than we have done, can lead to the formation of a PRINCIPLE OF DUTY and of ACTIVE HABITS OF DUTY, no otherwise than by inducing us to a course of prompt, prayerful, self-denying, liberal and laborious effort.

Forget not, then, my brethren, that you are responsible for not feeling and for not acting when the objects proper to awaken feeling, and the motives to a correspondent course of action are present. *Heedlessness*, *impenitence*, *unbelief*, *ungodliness*, *disobedience*, *insensibility*, *inhumanity*, are sins of just as deep a dye as positive iniquity. If you withdraw attention from the truth, consideration from the heathen, and a reverential obedience from Christ's commands, and thus keep that door of the heart shut through which "suffering from without finds its way to sympathy within," and authority compels obedience, you will be held accountable for all that unfaithfulness and imbecility which are the result of your own voluntary and guilty indifference.

And that God may thus work in each one of us to will and to do according to his good pleasure towards the heathen, let it be our present, fervent and continued prayer: "*God be merciful unto us and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us, that his way may be known upon the earth, his saving health among all nations.*"

NOTE.

Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland.

Chap. I., sec. 1. "Although the light of nature, and the works of Creation and Providence, do so far manifest the goodness, wisdom, and power of God, as to leave men inexcuseable, yet they are *not* sufficient to give that knowledge of God, and of His will, which is necessary unto Salvation."

Chap. X., concluding part of sect. 4. "They who never truly come to Christ cannot be saved; much less can men, not professing the Christian Religion, be saved in any other way whatsoever, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, and the law of that religion they do profess; and to assert and maintain that they *may*, is very pernicious, and to be detested."

Larger Catechism authorized by the Church of Scotland.

Quest. 60. "Can they who never heard the Gospel, and so know not Jesus Christ, nor believe in him, be saved by their living according to the light of nature?"

Ans. "They who having never heard the Gospel, know not Jesus Christ, and believe not in him, cannot be saved, be they ever so diligent to frame their lives according to the light of nature, or the laws of that religion they profess; there being no Salvation in *any other* but in Christ alone."

Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.

Article XVIII. The title of which is, "Of obtaining Eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ."

"They also are to be had accursed, that presume to say that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and

the light of nature; for Holy Scripture doth set out unto us only the name of Jesus Christ, whereby men must be saved."

The Bohemian Confession of Faith, presented to the King of the Romans and Bohemia, &c. Anno 1535. Art. VIII. De Ecclesia sancta.

See Helvetian Confession of Faith, Chap. XVII. and XVIII.

See Confession of Faith of the French Protestant Churches, Art. XXV. and XXVII.

See Belgic Confession of Faith, Art. XXVII. and XXVIII.

See Augsburg Confession of Faith, Art. V.

See Saxon Confession of Faith, presented to the Council of Trent. Anno 1551. Art. De Ecclesia.

See Confession of Faith agreed upon by the Ministers of New England. Anno 1680.

Also, Confession of Geneva, of Poland, of the Walloon and Palatine Churches.

The sentiments of these Churches upon the subject under consideration, will be found to be in unison with those contained in the quotations which have been made from the Confession of Faith of the Church of Scotland, and the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England.